

THE LITTLE BULL STRAW





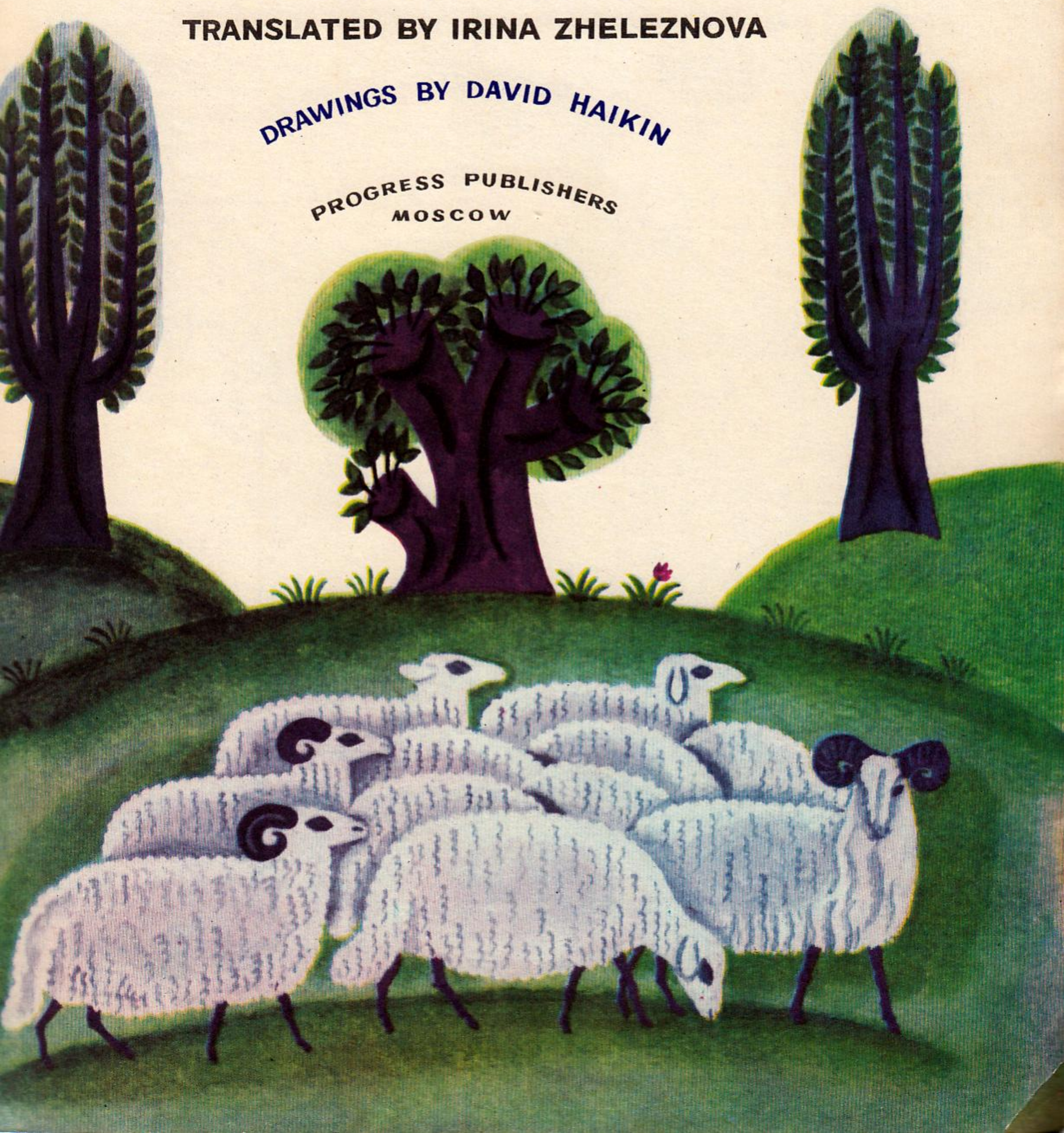
THE LITTLE STRAW BULL

A UKRAINIAN FOLK TALE

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THE LITTLE STRAW BULL

A Ukrainian Folk Tale

Once upon a time there lived an Old Man and an Old Woman. They had nothing to their name, not a bull, nor a calf, nor a chicken, and were as poor as poor can be.

The Old Man made tar and the Old Woman kept house, and that was the way they lived.

Now, the Old Woman began to fret and to worry and she said to the Old Man:

"Do make me a little bull of straw."

"What's come over you, you silly Old Woman, what do you want with a bull?"

"I shall take him out to graze."

There was nothing to be done, so the Old Man made a little bull of straw and he smeared his back and sides over with tar. And in the morning the Old Woman led the Little Straw Bull out to pasture and she took her spinning with her.

She sat down on a hillside and she spun her cloth and said:

"Graze, graze, Little Bull— Little Tarred Back!

"Graze, graze, Little Bull— Little Tarred Back!"

And she spun and she spun till at last she dozed away.

All of a sudden out of the great dark forest a Bear came running. He lumbered straight up to the Little Bull and said:

"Who are you?"

"I am the Little Straw Bull with the Tarred Back," said the Little Bull.

"Give me some tar, Little Bull, for the dogs have torn my side."

But the Little Straw Bull just stood there and made no reply. The Bear flew into a temper, he clawed at the Little Bull's back, and lo!—he was stuck fast.

The Old Woman woke up and she cried at the top of her voice:

"Make haste and come here, Old Man! The Little Bull has caught a Bear!"

The Old Man came running, he seized the Bear and threw him into the cellar.







On the next day the Old Woman led the Little Bull out to pasture again and she took her spinning with her. She sat down on a hillside and she spun her cloth and said:

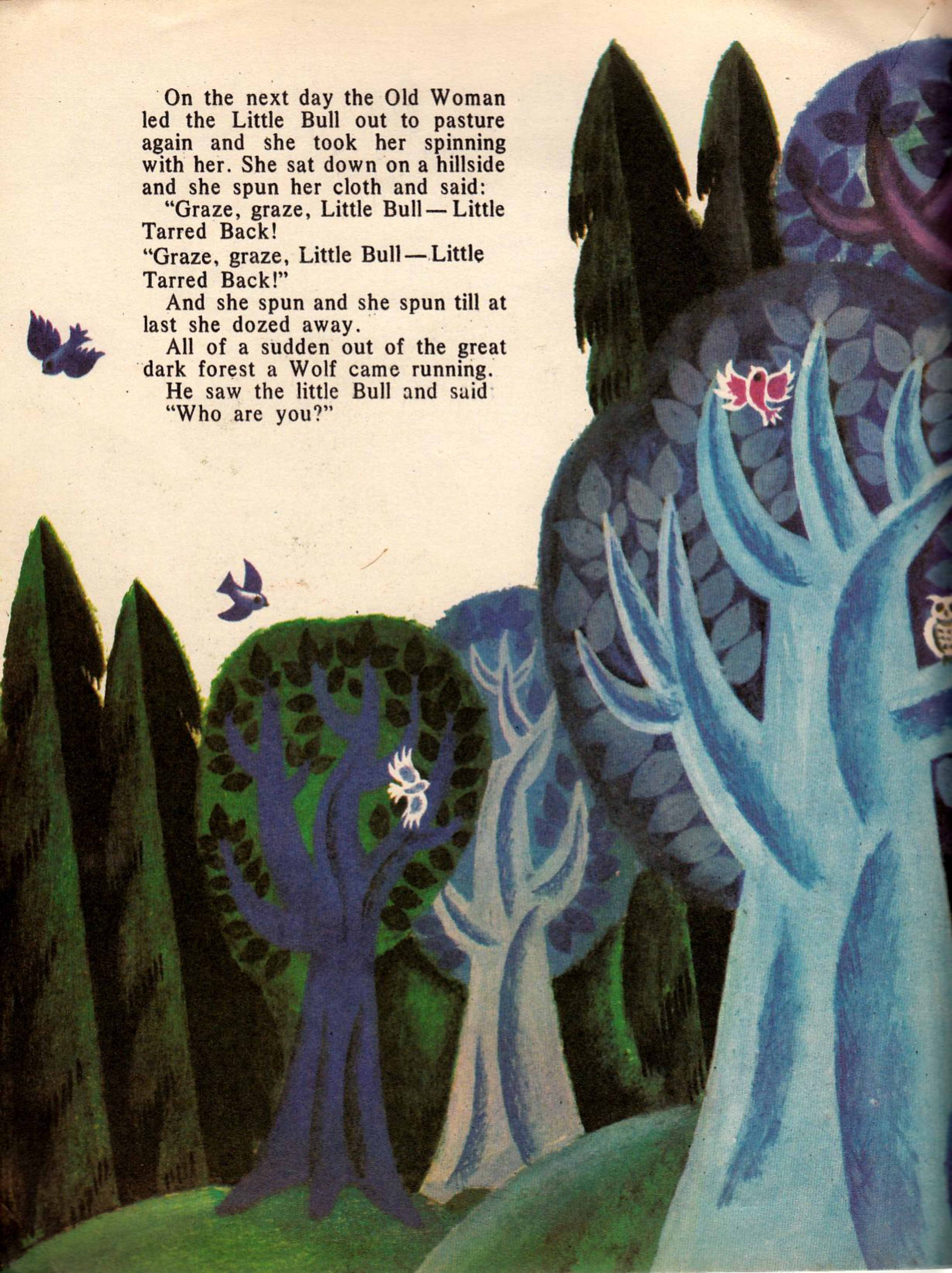
"Graze, graze, Little Bull — Little Tarred Back!

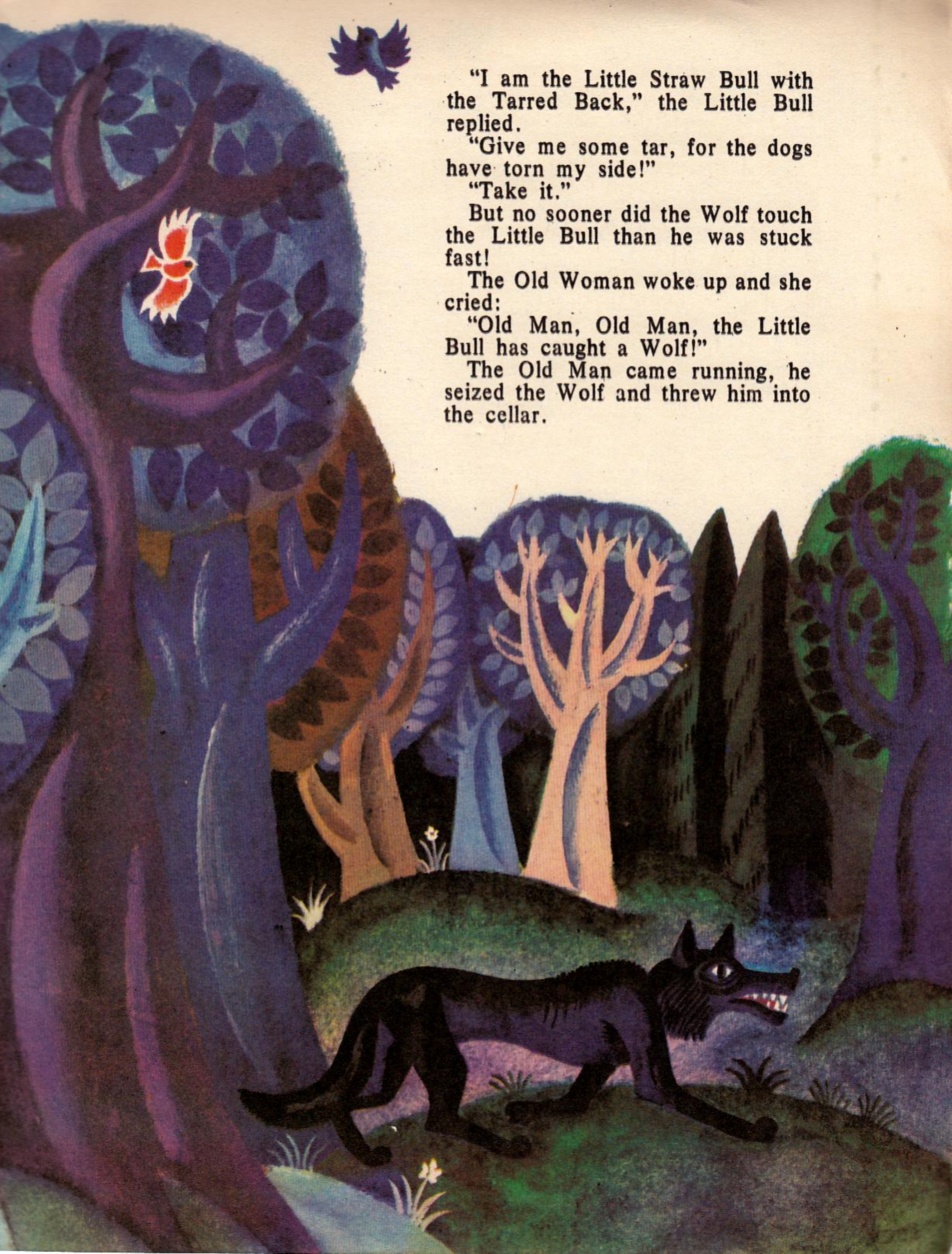
"Graze, graze, Little Bull — Little Tarred Back!"

And she spun and she spun till at last she dozed away.

All of a sudden out of the great dark forest a Wolf came running.

He saw the little Bull and said "Who are you?"





"I am the Little Straw Bull with the Tarred Back," the Little Bull replied.

"Give me some tar, for the dogs have torn my side!"

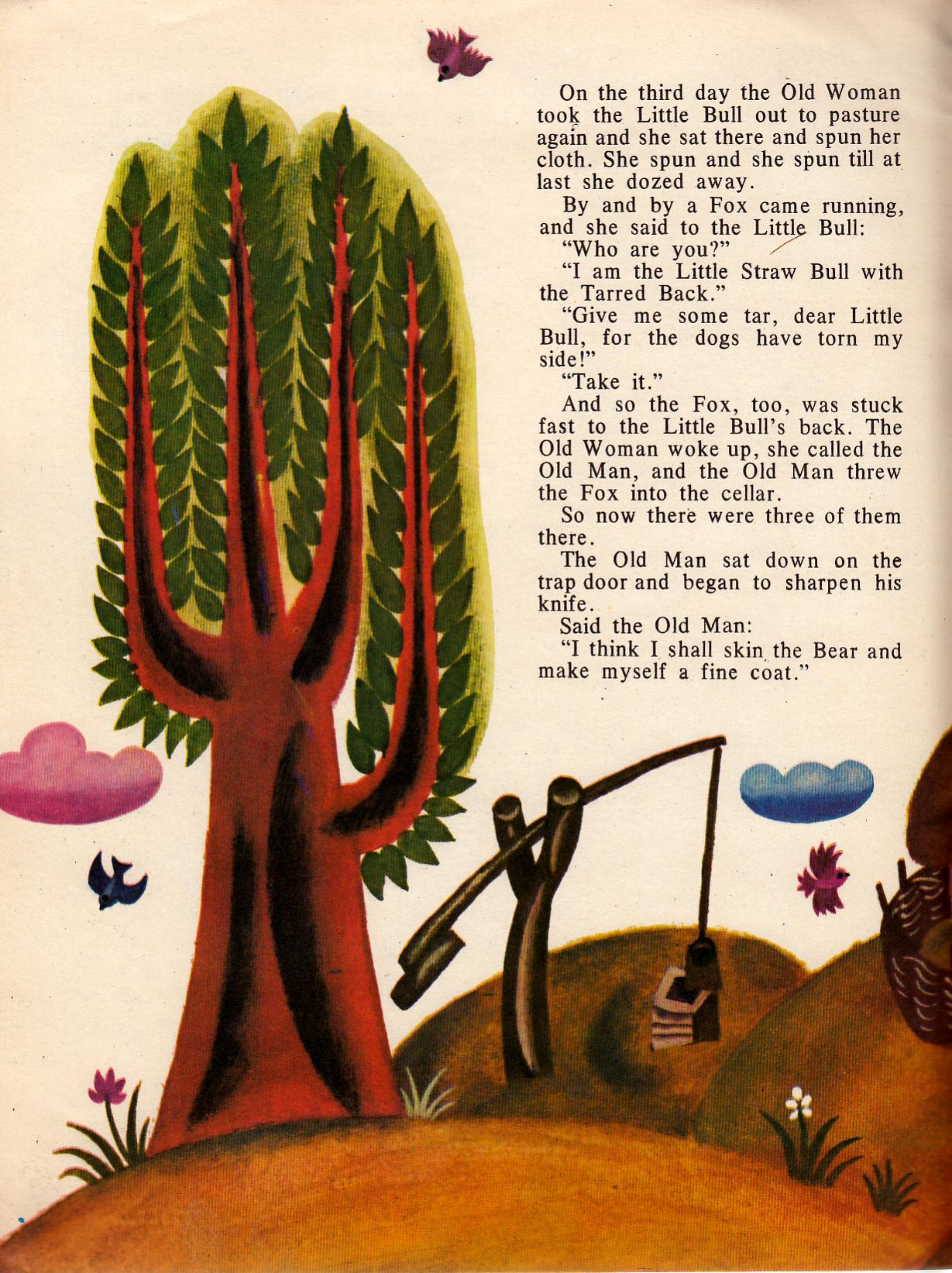
"Take it."

But no sooner did the Wolf touch the Little Bull than he was stuck fast!

The Old Woman woke up and she cried:

"Old Man, Old Man, the Little Bull has caught a Wolf!"

The Old Man came running, he seized the Wolf and threw him into the cellar.



On the third day the Old Woman took the Little Bull out to pasture again and she sat there and spun her cloth. She spun and she spun till at last she dozed away.

By and by a Fox came running, and she said to the Little Bull:

"Who are you?"

"I am the Little Straw Bull with the Tarred Back."

"Give me some tar, dear Little Bull, for the dogs have torn my side!"

"Take it."

And so the Fox, too, was stuck fast to the Little Bull's back. The Old Woman woke up, she called the Old Man, and the Old Man threw the Fox into the cellar.

So now there were three of them there.

The Old Man sat down on the trap door and began to sharpen his knife.

Said the Old Man:

"I think I shall skin the Bear and make myself a fine coat."







The Bear heard him and was very frightened.

"Do not kill me, Old Man!" he cried. "Let me go free and I shall bring you some honey."

"You won't fool me, will you?"

"Oh, no."

"Well, see that you don't."

And he set the Bear free and began to sharpen his knife again. The Wolf heard him and said:

"Why do you sharpen your knife, Old Man?"

"I am going to skin you and make myself a warm hat for the winter."

"Let me go free, and I shall bring you a herd of sheep."

"Well, see that you don't fool me."

And he let the Wolf go free and began to sharpen his knife again.

"Tell me, Old Man, why do you sharpen your knife?" asked the Fox.

"You have fine fluffy fur," the Old Man replied. "It will make a nice collar for my Old Woman's coat."

"Please do not kill me, Old Man! I shall bring you some chickens and ducks and geese."

"Well, see that you don't fool me."

And with that he let the Fox go free.

In the morning, before dawn had set in or day had broken, there came a rap-tap-tap at the door.

"Someone is knocking, Old Man!" the Old Woman cried. "Go and see who it is."

The Old Man opened the door, and there stood the Bear with a whole hive of honey!

The Old Man took the honey and put it away when suddenly there came a rap-tap-tap at the door again.

This time it was the Wolf with a whole herd of sheep. And very soon after the Fox appeared, bringing the chickens, the geese and the ducks.

The Old Man and the Old Woman were overjoyed. They lived in good health for many a year and never had cause to shed a tear.



A Ukrainian Folk Tale Retold by *A. Nechayev*

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